



**Dacorum Environmental Forum
Full Meeting via Zoom Thursday 19/11/2020**

MINUTES

Attendance

Name	Organisation
Gruff Edwards	Chair DEF
Steve Wilson	Vice Chair DEF
Mike Ridley	DEF and Friends of Halsey Field
Sherief Hassan	Hemel Resident
Cllr Brian Patterson	Tring Town Council
Paul de Hoest	Berkhamsted Town Council
Cllr Ron Tindall	DBC and HCC
Cllr Rob Beauchamp	DBC
Lucy Carmody	Aldbury PC

The following wanted to attend but could not for various reasons

Name	Organisation
Paul Harris	DEF
Mary Arnott Gee	DEF
Steven Godwin	Tring Rural Parish Council
Julie Banks	DBC Portfolio Holder for Community & Regulatory Services
Garrick Stevens	Berkhamsted Town Council

Meeting started at 7:30pm

1. Apologies

Cllr Alan Anderson Environmental Services Portfolio Holder DBC
Adrian Whyte DEF, Circular Economy Specialist

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

Not discussed

3. Matters arising

Updates on Halsey Field, LA3 Master Plan, Hemel Garden Communities/New Local Plan plus a new topic HCC Waste Local Plan Consultation had been sent out with the agenda E-mail.

MR said that subsequent to Friends of Halsey Field winning the competition for the CPRE Herts. Environment Award, a video of the ceremony including the presentation of the award to the Halsey Field project on Sept. 29th had now been published on YouTube. Negotiations with HCC regarding insurance for working parties on the field were continuing. One possibility was to use the insurance policy of the Countryside Management Service.

MR said that DEF's recently sent letter to the new Chief Executive of DBC regarding LA3 and the Climate Emergency should be followed up with one citing the Government's recently announced Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution.

RT said that DBC were currently awaiting detail on the Ten Point Plan from central Government.

5. Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan 2018 - 2031 (LTP4, May 2018)

For convenience and prior reading **GE** had extracted into a twelve-page document the twenty three Policies from the 123 page Plan plus the significant preambles and context and the sections on the three "Major Schemes and Corridor Commentaries" that primarily affected Dacorum. (This was sent to the full DEF mailing list on Nov 3rd.) He said that DEF should commend aspirations in the plan to encourage "modal shifts" away from car use, in order to counterbalance possible pressure from other quarters who might feel that it was too anti-car.

LC said that there should be more emphasis in the Plan on the provision of charging stations for electric cars.

RT said that one problem was the provision of sufficient power supplies for car parks, laying cables etc. A report on the topic to the relevant DBC committee was expected.

SH asked whether there was reluctance from car park owners to provide sufficient charging bays, as they did not perceive a demand for them.

RT said that he did not think that that was the case.

SH said that there should be more emphasis on "Zoning" areas for pedestrian- and cycle-only use, with easy access to these zones by bus users. This worked very well in Munich.

SW said that while aspiration in the plan for improved bus services were all very well, in fact HCC had cut down on bus services in recent years.

RT said that the funds available to HCC would be down next year as a result of Corona Virus, so they would be less able to subsidise bus services.

MR said that the reliability of the bus services had to improve if people were to be persuaded to use them rather than a car. It was very difficult to plan a journey when needing to factor in the possibility of a bus not turning up. Reliability could be improved by having a pool of buses on standby in case of breakdowns.

PdeH referred to Policy 9, "Buses", which includes for instance "Reviewing, procuring and supporting cost effective and efficient bus services to improve accessibility and respond to existing and potential passenger needs." which he said merely reflected what ought to be the current "day job". Improved standards should be spelt out, together with a plan for achieving them.

RB said that to achieve the necessary improvement, buses would need to be regulated more closely by HCC. He cited Transport for London (TFL) as an example of a well regulated and efficient public transport system. Also, Local Authorities should become more engaged than they are at present with the management of on-street parking.

RT said that giving Local Authorities these powers would require (central) Government legislation.

BP said that it was unrealistic to expect the provision of for example Tring's bus services to improve in the foreseeable future through the kind of regulation seen in London.

SW said that overall the Plan needed to indicate how its various aspirations could be achieved. It needed "more flesh on the bones."

RT said that the Plan now needed to be informed by research into the ongoing effects of COVID-19 on patterns of work and commuting.

Regarding Policy 5: "Development Management" he pointed out that the planned Maylands Technopark and proposed Garden Communities were on opposite sides of Hemel Hempstead to the railway station and that research into the consequences of this was required.

GE said, with regard to Policies 7 and 8: Active Travel - Walking and Cycling respectively, that these two modes were too often lumped together, ignoring a conflict of interest over space and safety. There was a need to balance the interests of cyclists and pedestrians when considering schemes to facilitate more cycling. The balance should have regard to the relative numbers of these two modes. According to the ONS pedestrian trips generally outnumber cycling trips by a factor of 20 for all months except June and July, when the ratio falls to 10. It should also be borne in mind that cycling is less of an option for older age groups, particularly when hills are involved. It was also important to distinguish between recreational cycling and walking, which often involves a car to get to a start point, and the functional use of these two modes as an alternative to driving.

RB agreed with these observations.

SH said the key to any conflict between the two modes lay in clear signage. For instance in Munich it was very good, whereas in Hemel it was unclear, inconsistent, and poorly maintained.

SH said that a big consideration for cyclists was the provision of secure cycle parking, Policy 8 did indeed contain "e) Facilitating provision of secure cycle parking." at the end of the list, but this should be at the top of the list as it requires major investment.

BP said (see Policy 15: "Speed Management"), that more traffic calming measures were needed, such as those currently being implemented in Tring, for example 20 mph zones.

RB said that traffic calming was the responsibility of HCC.

PdeH said (see Policy 7: "Active Travel - Walking ") pointed out the failure to provide sufficient footbridges along the Berkhamsted section of the A41 to enable safe pedestrian access from Berkhamsted to the footpath network on the other side.

Re Policy 14: "Climate Change Network Resilience" and Policy 20: "Air Quality" and the Plan's pledged support of Ultra Low Emission Cars & Vehicles (ULEV) including electric cars, he said that the Government's target of making all new cars electric by 2030 should not be an excuse for complacency over ever-increasing traffic levels, pressure for which would come from proposed large scale housing developments such as Hemel Garden Communities. Electric cars, too would have an impact on climate change, for instance because of manufacturing energy, and on air quality, for instance because of tyre pollution.

SW asked, in relation to the West Hemel LA3 housing development, to what extent its transport implications had been taken on board in the New Local Plan, and what powers did HCC have to address those implications.

RB said that the problem was that many housing developments were not near to employment areas. Also an increasing number of people who work in London are deciding to live in areas such as Dacorum.

SW said that there would possibly be reverse migration from areas such as Dacorum to London if, post COVID, there was a surplus of office blocks in London that were then converted to housing, like Hemel's K2.

LC in a subsequent communication said that re Policy 21: "Environment" we should mention the protection of biodiversity in central reservations and on sides of roads and in any construction in bio-sensitive areas, for instance by the creation of biodiversity crossing corridors where habitats are split by road construction.

6. Any Other Business

BP said that public consultation on Dacorum's New Local Plan was due to start this month, and proposed a further meeting to discuss a DEF response. Those present agreed to a date and time for such a meeting, 15th Jan 2021 at 7:30pm.

All thanked **SH** for handling the technical side of the meeting. Despite several failures to connect (see list above) it was felt that the discussion had been successful. **GE** said that he hoped to put together a statement drawing on ideas from it to send on behalf of DEF to the Strategic Transport and Rail Team at HCC.

The following dates for 2021 have been agreed by the DEF Steering Group:

Steering Group: 12th Jan, 23rd March, 29th June, 5th Oct.

Main: 11th Feb., 13th May, 16th Sept., 18th Nov.

Dates for the main meetings have been booked at the fire station in case their Meeting Room should again become available.